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J. Nick Perrin.
The Jewel of Cahokia

(1936)

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY



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FOREWORD

To get a preliminary historical insight, the following is offered before going into the romance.

The Jolliet-Marquette Expedition in 1673 (in search of a great river which might empty into a western ocean and furnish a short passage to far-away Cathay) discovered the northern Mississippi River and voyaged as far south as Arkansas; whereupon the discoverers concluded that the river did not flow into a western ocean; and on returning to the Chain of Great Lakes they ascended the Illinois River and founded the first white settlement in the "Illinois Country" by dedicating a Mission Station among the Kaskaskia Indians on a site in the present LaSalle County. Later the Kaskaskias, on account of troubles with other tribes, moved their habitat. They came southward until they found a lodgment between the Mississippi and Kaskaskia Rivers and this became the successor to the Kaskaskia they had left. The settlement of Cahokia was begun about that time also.

The Mississippi Valley, from the Gulf to the Lakes, became subject to the dominion of France through the foregoing expedition and that of LaSalle to the Gulf in 1682. In order to hold dominion, forts were established at various points. Fort Chartres was the principal, originally built of logs but reconstructed with stone. The Valley remained under French control until the close of the French-Indian War, when the east

side was transferred to Great Britain. In 1765, a British Military Company was sent to Fort Chartres, and many French settlers left the east side.

In 1769, Pontiac was killed at Cahokia.

In 1772, Fort Chartres was threatened by encroachments of the Mississippi River and the British Headquarters were moved to Kaskaskia where the capture of the Northwest was made by George Rogers Clark and his men on July 4, 1778.

THE STORY

The story is an imaginary romance pertaining to the early Cahokia period. And while names and narrations may be fictitious, yet some conception may be derived as to mannerisms of that time. The scene is the Cahokia neighborhood and what was once known as "The American Bottom," which extended from Alton to Chester and from the Mississippi River five miles eastward in Illinois. The Grand Marais or Great Marsh was a shallow depression in the heart of this tract.

Throughout the story, the Capital A as a marker means as follows:

Chapter 1. A. St. Ange de Belle Rive yielded Fort Chartres on Oct. 10, 1765. Then many settlers moved to St. Louis, which was known as Pain Court or Short Bread.

Chapter 2. A. "Halcyon Period"—Prosperity had been at its height preceding the British Conquest. The population was about 3,000.

Chapter 3. A. "Tambour." A drummer.

Chapter 7. A. "Rigolet." The little stream known as Cahokia Creek.

CHAPTER ONE

THE STAR OF INDEPENDENCE

There was a time when none but happy homes were in the fertile valley in Southern Illinois bordering on the eastern shore of the Mississippi River. But their happiness in the course of time departed; for, when despotic minions came as heralds of the advent of a foreign power, all the simple, sweet contentment of the early-time French settlers vanished. These minions came just when October's chilly touch began to turn the green of nature into yellow. (A). Not content to come and merely witness frosts of Autumn lay to waste the fields and pastures, they brought along a human blight whose cruel touch was laid upon the hearts of all the people. And when the British flag was planted on the ramparts of Fort Chartres, the Star of Independence temporarily ceased to shine upon this Valley.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HUMAN BLIGHT

"Oh! this blight is cruel and we cannot bear its touch much longer—C'est bien triste."

Sadly thus had Grandsire Vieuxtemps spoken.

Sadly thus within his olden homestead.

And he had good reasons for his sadness.

He had come into the Mississippi Valley when its people were but few in numbers; he had built his home in unpretentious style just like the neighboring houses by which he was surrounded; he had watched with pride the grow-

ing success of the infant settlements; he had seen the growth of villages and the influx of new settlers and had been a witness of the great achievements of the early comers; he had noted scenes and changes which had taken place for more than forty years upon this garden-spot within the center of the new-found world where French dominion early gained a foothold. He had seen and heard and felt and tasted all; and he could well recall the most minute event within its history which to him was like a most familiar theme. It is no wonder then, that, having passed through the bright and golden era of this locality, he should have felt a tinge of sadness in the contemplation of the changed conditions. Neither is it strange, that, as he thought of how the sun of freedom used to shine into the lives of his simple, honest, unsuspecting neighbors and how the clouds of black oppression had appeared to utterly obscure their brightness, he should feel impelled to say, "Oh! this blight is cruel." When his mind reviewed the mild and gentle sway of those who had been sent to rule as French Commandants and brought it into contrast with the haughty bearing of the agents of a foreign tyrant who had come to take possession, no wonder he described the situation as becoming unbearable. He had lived amid the halcyon period (A) under those Commandants who in successive turn were placed in charge of the New World's greatest military stronghold at Fort Chartres. And from where with fostering care they had guided,

watched and guarded the welfare of the inhabitants within their jurisdiction. When this halcyon period ended, he saw the paling of the Star of Independence—and the “blight” indeed had settled on the Valley.

Among the entries on the record of the world's great journal, Time had placed the sum of nine and seventy years to Grandsire Vieuxtemps' credit. On this evening, in the year of Seventeen Hundred and Sixty-Nine, this aged Frenchman sat within that unpretentious homestead where in unpretentious fashion many a guest from time to time had found a welcome; but where now there came a chill of woe unwelcome which made the aged Frenchman shudder. Seated thus, he gave an utterance to those words of which the frightful echoes seemed to linger as if they too intended cruelly to add their mockery to the load of pain beneath whose weight he had already been overburdened. This was one of the few times in his life that he had murmured. It was the first time that he sank in utter desolation. And as he sat in his old arm-chair which his neighbor, Pierre Vannier, the basket-maker, had made him twenty years before out of willows, shades of sorrow gathered everywhere around him till he closed his eyes to keep away the monsters that began to flit among the shadows. His head, which in his youth was covered by the raven locks so common in the Midi (though which for many years had worn a coat of snowy whiteness) he allowed to sink upon his bosom and in silence then he sat as if

absorbed in dreaming over all the former history of his lengthy lifetime. Perhaps he reverted to the early homestead in the sunny Languedoc where, nearly four score years before, his eyes just opened to behold the splendors of the Eastern Pyrenses; perhaps he dwelt upon his boyhood days in Southern France, where often he had watched the River Aude as it wound its way between its banks to find an outlet in the Gulf of Lyons; or, yet perhaps he dwelt upon the happy scene, when in his young manhood's years, he led the belle of Carcassone beneath the altar of St. Michael's Church; or on that day, when lured by wild, delusive tales of wealth, with wife and an infant babe (that was born at sea) they landed on the shores of Mobile Bay, from whence they journeyed to the spot where Bienville had begun to plant the New Orleans; or, speeding over toils and hardships in the canebrakes and the bayous, perhaps his mind recalled his last adieu to Louisiana; then, perhaps it sped upon the current of the river on whose bosom he and all that fate had left him, was, with grave forebodings, carried to the landing where some four and forty years before that evening he had found the little village of Cahokia with about a score of cabins which since then had been the scene of all his earthly trials; these latter four and forty years, though not unmixed with troubles, had yet been years of peace and plenty during whose eventful marches large returns came into his coffer from the grain and fur trades which had grown extensive with

the more remote and Northern settlers; on the whole, these years had brought contentment to his homestead and as his dream reviewed them, the shades began to leave his visage, except when dwelling on the loss of a beloved one, who was the cherished daughter born at sea while on the trip to America, but, who had died just one and twenty years before, leaving in her place, however, as a balm to heal the wounded heart-strings of her spouse and aged parents, a smiling, precious infant who became thenceforth a member of the Vieuxtemps household and to whom good Madame Vieuxtemps, in remembrance of her first-born, gave the self same name and called her Nannette. With this exception, the dream of these last years became more soothing. The dream of blessings, that the earth had showered upon him, certainly could not disturb his reverie but rather lent its influence to rivet him in utter and unconscious dreaming.

All the while that this had lasted, his ancient partner, in her arm-chair, which was the mate to his and also had been made by Pierre Vannier (the basket-maker), had sat and pondered while she watched his movements and emotions. Her head had whitened too beneath the snows of many winters; as her career had marked the space of four and seventy years. Her cheeks had paled and now possessed no more their early fulness. Her shapeliness of form had vanished as the power of age had crept upon her. She, who had been blest with beauty, had outlived its transient splendors. In its stead were

sallow features. In the place of merry laughing dimples were the wrinkled furrows which old Time had dug out with his plow-share. Yet, withal, as she watched her partner with a fervent wish to cheer him, while she knew that beauty's charms had left her, yet she also knew, in spite of all, that he (who sad and silent sat there) still would own her as the belle of Carcassone forever! Knowing this, she ventured finally to cheer him.

"Oui; c'est bien triste. Yes, the touch is cruel"; said the good old Madame Vieuxtemps; "but my honest husband, don't you think, that as the world is large, there may be some spot where tyrants do not wield oppression? You know that in the West there are the wild and tangled forests and the broad and endless prairies where no British Tyrant yet has entered; even just on the other side of this broad Mississippi, which flows hard by our village, freedom might be found. While our cup is filled with sorrow, is there not a ray of hope beyond the river?"

"There is a ray of hope beyond the river; but it is beyond that river from whose banks our angel daughter beckons," said the old man as if just awakening from his wandering reverie; "for us there is a ray of hope alone beyond that river. We have trod the path of life together now for more than fifty years. The sunshine oft has told the way and even when the darkness hid the path, we struggled on together, cheered by each other's voices until light shone

out again. Thus, for more than fifty years, we've struggled till at last, when plenty came to bless our board and crown our toil, a worse misfortune comes than all the varied toils and struggles since our lives began. And as our span is nearly rounded out, the arch sinks down beneath a heavy load. There is no earthly hope—*Je suis tout a fait accable de soucie.*”

“But,” ventured Madam Vieuxtemps, “many of our neighbors have found asylums on the Spanish banks across the river. Some have gone to join the vanguard in the building of the village of Saint Louis, where Laclede has lately begun his settlement. Some have moved to Sainte Genevieve, while others, still more fearful, have journeyed further till they found a home at Natchez. Others journeyed further still, till they found a haven in the Southland where Baton-Rouge and New Orleans present a cordial welcome. Let us go and spend our days in quiet. Let us sell the homestead and its arpents and with household treasures packed for moving, let us bid farewell to friends and neighbors and turn our faces to the West, where in the land of sunsets, there is yet a hope amid the twilight. Let us go and take our Nanette with us.”

“Nanette,” said the grandsire, “Where is Nanette?”

At the mention of her name, he roused to wakefulness

"She has gone to church; she went to evening vespers," said the good wife.

With unusual mien and motion, Grandsire Vieuxtemps rose from out his arm-chair. With strangest voice he said, "I fear that Nannette has tarried too long for vespers." Moving toward the door, he seized the latch which served to fasten and throwing open wide the doorway, halted at the scene which met his dimmed and aged eyesight. There was Nannette! Kneeling, but not kneeling at her vespers! Amid the glare of firelights, which threw their glimmerings on the village, he saw her kneeling and imploring; though defiance plainly marked her bearing. But she knelt before no shrine of Saint nor Virgin, nor yet implored the powers of heaven. She knelt before a power whose character is savage and relentless. The aged Frenchman gasped and whispered, "The savages are in the village —les sauvages sont dans notre village."

CHAPTER THREE

THE ASSASSINATION OF PONTIAC

The fragments of the Illinois Indian Confederacy, comprising remnants of the Kaskaskias, Peorias, Tammaroas and Cahokias, had drifted into the region bordering on the eastern bank of the Mississippi River in the southern part of Illinois, and about the time when the transfer of this Valley from the French to the English took place, this mixed and mongrel Indian population camped in the neighborhood of the French villages and around the infant settlements. They

were a degenerate race though it may be doubted if their fall was very great inasmuch as they were unable to boast of any very proud ancestry. They made frequent raids upon the personal belongings of the settlers, which led to numerous quarrels and sometimes serious troubles. In the outskirts of the village of Cahokia lived a quiet inoffensive Alsation Frenchman who tilled his arpents with a prudent husbandman's devotion. Although early raised amid the scenes of warfare in his native country yet he had beaten swords into plowshares and pursued the art of agriculture in the new-found Continent. His father had been a Tambour (A) in the service of the "Grand Monarque," Louis the Fourteenth. He was therefore named in honor of his King. His father named him Louis—Louis Roubasse. When but a child his father had taken him along to the wars. At the age of fourteen at the battle of Malplaquet he saw his father fall and seizing the drum which his sire had borne he took up the beat that led the march against the allied hosts. In after years, when in his new-world home, he often told to listening friends the story of this fight when resting from his toils upon the Sabbath Day while gazing on his flocks which fed upon the Common Fields. One Sabbath evening after sunset, while thus recounting deeds of valor of the "Grand Monarque," in the fast approaching twilight far across the Common Fields, a stealthy figure approached, whose steps were bent toward his flocks. The drummer's practised eye caught sight of the mov-

ing object in the dusk and when his suspicions were hinted to his neighbors at his side they soon began to think of deeds of daring nearer home than on Malplaquet's field of war. Calling to his son he warned him to be ready for the charge. His son had all the traits of his paternal lineage. Lambert Roubasse was the worthy son of him who had seized Malplaquet's drum. He had arrived at manhood's full estate. His limbs were strong. His frame was as of steel. His heart was brave. Without a tremor in his nerves he watched the thief's approach as well as the dusk of the evening would permit until he saw his faint outlines near the herds and felt (rather than saw) him throw a lasso on the neck of the finest horse. Fleet as the wind the olden drummer's son sped through the gloom and round the field to where the road led to the brakes upon the Rigolet and unperceived came on the thief just as he was about to make his exit from the close. With agile bound he fell upon the culprit, with such a force as to fell him to the ground, where with strong arms he pinioned him until his cry of pain awoke the echoes of the early night.

"Kinneboo," said Lambert retaining him in his clutches, "You are the worst half-breed in the Valley. You never did anything but lie and steal. I have caught you now but will let you go this time. But if you ever cross my path again you will not have so easy a settlement." With this he lifted Kinneboo and with a violent shove

he thrust him away amid the darkness. And while Lambert Roubasse led his horse back and wended his way homeward, the half-breed Peoria savage wandered back to the Indian camp-fires near the village, muttering curses on the whites in general and on Lambert in particular. These curses bore their fruits in subsequent events in which both Lambert and Kinneboo figured again among the principals. The bitterest fruit too fell amid a scene where joyous sports were crowned with festive wreaths. It was on the occasion of a great ball given at Cahokia. The early-time French Settlers were very fond of gayety and dancing parties were formed frequently at which mirth flourished in all its pristine vigor. It was at one of these parties that a great catastrophe took place which has made the ancient village famous. This was the assassination of Pontiac, the great Ottawa Indian Chieftain. Pontiac has justly been styled the Bonaparte of North American Indians. He it was who originated the great plan of forming all the Western Indian tribes into a great confederacy to resist the encroachments of the English. Year after year the red children of the country had seen the tide of white settlement sweeping westward. As they beheld their possessions receding before this onward sweep they realized that the future had in store for them naught but ultimate extinction unless some providence should turn back the ruthless march of progress. Hence they were ripe for vengeance and resistance. The great Master-Spirit

arose among them. This was Pontiac—the most famous chieftain of history, a warrior of renown and courage and a man of his people. He had won his laurels at Detroit against the northern Indians. He was heard of at the great defeat of Braddock. He was in the French-Indian War at Quebec and received a uniform from Montcalm, the celebrated French Commander. Then he organized what is known as his great “Conspiracy.” There was a general uprising and in a month nearly all the English posts were captured. Detroit held out and the siege was protracted into a twelve-month. Finally when Bradstreet came to relieve it, the war came to a sudden termination. Pontiac’s tribes and allies asked for quarter. He himself refused to enter into submission for two years longer. When at last he was almost alone and his great army scattered, he too finally yielded. For four long years he had planned and battled but at last his power was broken. During all of this time he lived in friendship with the Frenchmen. When the crisis came he sought a refuge among them. He came to see his friend, the elder Chouteau of St. Louis, who was a protege of Laclede’s. While there he heard of a ball at Cahokia; and dressed in his uniform (the one Montcalm had given him) he came across the river to mingle with his friends in the little village. All the French were his friends. But the hatred still existed among the British. And the village, in fact the entire Valley was in the military possession of the British. They had companies of soldiers stationed at all

of the principal trading stations. When it became known that Pontiac had arrived in the village a British trader bribed a half-breed Peoria Indian to accomplish his assassination. This assassin thus selected was so steeped in degeneracy that a barrel of rum was all the bribe required. During the evening of the ball while the festival was at its height and "eyes looked love to eyes which spake again" a shock came to the assemblage as terrible as when the cannon's roar was heard at Belgium's Capital. Kinneboo burst into the ball-room and announced that he had seen the killing of Pontiac in the edge of the village by a white man. And vowing vengeance (pretendingly) unless the murderer were immediately delivered, he told the astonished dancers that all the Indian tribes had been notified and had gathered on the spot of the murder, ready to wreak vengeance on the whole village unless reparation should be swiftly made. The moment was critical. The sounds of mirth were hushed. The merry-makers stood around in awe until the drummer of Malplaquet stepped up before the crowd and addressing Kinneboo said:

"Who saw this deed committed?"

"I saw it," grunted Kinneboo.

"Who else was witness to this crime atrocious?" further queried then the drummer.

"I was alone," responded the half-breed.

"Alone and what was your mission near this scene which you claim to have witnessed?" de-

manded further the Hero of Malplaquet. To which Kinneboo gave no answer. Whereon the old Alsatian drummer turned toward his neighbors. His words were quick and pointed.

"Friends," he said, "no Frenchman ever laid a hand except in friendship on the form of Pontiac. He was a friend to us and we were friends to him. Hence we ourselves will seek the slayer—*nous le trouverons plus tard nous-memes.*"

Just as he had finished his exhortation a wild and savage cry of exultation broke upon the ears of those in the assembly. Rushing to the outside they beheld the lurid glare of firelights near the fringe of forest, which was upon the outskirts. And in the glare they saw a human form dragged forward by a squad of savages. At sight of this many of the villagers began to tremble. The old Alsatian felt by instinct that now some closer danger boded. He called for Lambert. But Lambert was not among the crowd of lookers-on. No one had seen him since the early part of the ball. The thought flashed through the drummer's brain that Lambert was in the clutches of the savages. Fiercely turning on Kinneboo he demanded what further information he was ready to impart. Kinneboo, pointing in the direction of the form which could be descried by the glare of the fagots, said:

"There is the slayer and he is your son!"

"Fiend and liar," hissed the old man; but ere he had the chance to seize his son's accuser,

Kinneboo had escaped in the direction of the Indian assemblage. The crowd of villagers just then saw another figure burst upon the scene. It was the form of a woman. She ran among the excited Indians and throwing herself between them and the accused she defied them to slay her. A shout went up from the villagers:

"That is Nannette; there is the jewel of the village!"

Louis Roubasse, the Alsatian drummer of Malplaquet, called upon the little band and said to them: "I do not ask that others shall risk their lives for me and mine, but I must save my son."

Whereon Nannette's father (Jean Pierre Falliere) spoke up quickly: "And I, my daughter; though her own bravery may save both him and her without us."

"We will help you at the peril of our lives," shouted the villagers in chorus. And with this cry upon their lips, they rushed toward the place where Nannette knelt, as Grandsire Vieuxtemps had seen her kneel just as he opened wide his cabin door. Had seen her kneeling, but not kneeling at her vespers! For amid the glare of firelights which thrust their glimmerings on the village she was kneeling and imploring, though defiant. But she knelt before no Shrine of Saint nor Virgin, nor yet implored the powers of heaven. She knelt before a power whose character was savage and relentless.

The savages were in the village!

CHAPTER FOUR

THE JEWEL OF THE VILLAGE

In the center of the village of Cahokia stood the Mission Church of St. Sulpice. In its little tower swung the bell which had been given to the inhabitants by the French King Louis in 1740. Every evening the bell rang out the Angelus and as its tones fell upon the ears of the devout worshippers in the Valley they would stop from their work to offer up their prayers. Among them all none was more devout than Nannette Falliere—the loveliest daughter of the village.

On the evening of the grand fete the Angelus had been sounded; the villagers had returned to their homes from the fields; the evening meal had been finished; the belles and beaux were preparing for the ball-room. Nanette went to the Mission of St. Sulpice to her evening devotions. After rendering her religious tribute she received the benediction of the pious Mission Priest and started homeward. But on her way she passed the ball-room where the throng had gathered and where the festivities were just beginning. Lambert Roubasse arrived just as she was passing. The announcement was made within that all should select their partners. Just as this announcement was made Lambert made his salutation to Nannette and as if the announcement carried with it a suggestion he gaily remarked:

“They may need one more couple.”

To which she replied:

"I have often helped them; and have often been your partner; but tonight you will excuse me."

"Why Nannette they will wonder what has happened if this evening is not enlivened by your presence."

"Yes, I know they'll wonder and I'm very sorry."

"Then there must be something serious to prevent you. For you have always been the charm of every festival."

"Yes, there is something serious."

"Can it be possible that anything or anyone should mar your pleasure?"

"There is everything to mar our pleasure. But this is no place to talk of matters over which my heart is well-nigh broken."

"Then while the merry-makers dance the gay cotillion I will walk with you upon your solemn journey homeward. But, as your friend from childhood, you should tell me something of your troubles and as a friend I'll promise to betray no lack of interest and will render what assistance I can feebly give you."

Together then they walked upon the "solemn journey homeward"; past the cabins where the inmates were preparing to retire early; between the rows of houses where soon would settle nightly stillness like that which in older coun-

tries follows curfew. On they journeyed in the gloom and in silence. On, until they reached the Rigolet, a little rippling streamlet on whose other bank there stood the Vieuxtemps homestead. On this spot amid the solemn silence, only broken by the rippings of the streamlet, Nannette found an utterance.

"Lambert." said the maiden, "we have played upon the banks of this little stream in our childhood; we scattered sands upon its gurgling current and laved our hands and feet beneath its waters. In the fringe of forest yonder too we wove our garlands in the springtime and gathered nuts in autumn. Many happy days were showered on our lot in simple fashion; many happy evenings too were spent in pleasure as in yonder ball-room which tonight we did not enter. Now, when you have grown to manhood and I am almost a woman, these happy scenes are but the memories of a former golden epoch."

And as these words were uttered the Rigolet almost hushed its gurglings as if it tried to listen to the story of its old-time playmates. And as if at times it caught the meaning it would now and then give forth a little murmur just as though it too had found a lodgment for some sadness in its bosom.

Then continued the maiden with her plaintive story: "Yes, memories of a former golden epoch; when St. Ange de Belle Rive, our last and noblest of the French Commandants, gave the Keys of our Fort Chartres to the English, and

foreign troops were quartered on us, the memories of the past were all they left us. This is why I am so sad. Already many of our neighbors have gone to cast their fortunes elsewhere. And Grandsire Vieuxtemps acts so strangely that he may contemplate, for aught I know, this very minute a removal from these loved and early scenes of ours."

Then they thought they heard a sound as if the Rigolet had choked with anguish. Ere another word was spoken their ears were met with sounds as if the choke of death had fallen on the streamlet. Turning in that direction they did behold the choke of death but not of their favorite streamlet. But close beyond it, underneath a spreading poplar, by the glare of a single fagot, they discerned the cause of that almost unearthly gurgle which had attracted their attention. There they saw the form of a human being, dressed in the uniform of a French soldier, amid the throes of final expiration and above him the form of a savage with a burning fagot in his left hand by the glare of which they saw the deadly weapon held aloft in his right hand.

Lambert pressed the maiden from the scene of horror and led her to the door of her homestead. But she felt a longing to find the outcome of this latest catastrophe. Hence she lingered alone in the darkness. While thus she tarried, Lambert crossed the stream but in clambering up its little bank he made a noise which attracted the savage who was just leaving the

neighborhood and amid the darkness Lambert suddenly found himself pounced upon by the slayer whose murderous act he had witnessed. The murderer immediately gave the signal which brought the rest of the Indians to the spot where they found Lambert wrestling in the clutches of Kinneboo and accused by the latter of the murder of Pontiac. Lambert Roubasse, overpowered by numbers, was dragged to the Indian camp in the forest near the edge of the village while Kinneboo hurried through the streets and burst into the ball-room with his startling announcement. Nannette had heard and witnessed all of this commotion. Had heard the signal and the tumult of the savages. And she hastened from the doorstep of her homestead to come to the rescue. Just as the Indians were dragging Lambert before their campfires she burst between them and him and falling on her knees declared him innocent and asked that she herself be slain to appease their savage vengeance. Just then the door of the cabin was opened from which Grandsire Vieuxtemps saw his grandchild and in horror gasped, "the savages are in the village." Just then too the villagers poured from the ball-room and when they looked upon the scene shouted:

"There is Nannette; there is the jewel of the village."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WANTON INSULT

When the crowd of villagers arrived upon the tragic scene they found Nannette insisting on Lambert's innocence and begging that the British Officer in command of the garrison be called. The presence of the villagers had the effect of enforcing her appeals and a messenger was dispatched to the little fort to inform the British Captain of the grave situation and request his presence. The officer soon arrived and after a brief hearing, ordered Lambert to the military prison pending further investigation. He deemed it necessary (so he said) to probe the matter to the bottom in order to find the guilty criminal and also deemed this action necessary for the safety of the prisoner and the peace of the village.

Lambert was sent to the fort that night; the villagers dispersed and Nannette started homeward. As she had crossed the Rigolet and before she came to the entrance of her gateway she was accosted by someone, whose voice was not unfamiliar. It was the voice of a young British trader stationed at the village.

"A bad night's work," he said, "but what will come tomorrow?"

"The proof of Lambert's innocence," the guileless village maiden promptly answered.

"I wish him well," the trader responded. "But, I fear his sole testimony may not be strong

enough to overcome the circumstances which go to corroborate the charge of Kinneboo. It is known that Lambert was abroad and was found near the scene of Pontiac's murder. He was absent from the ball-room; and suppose no witness can reinforce his own denial!"

"Nevertheless the morrow will prove him guiltless," insisted Nannette.

"Maiden," said the young trader," you seem to take a lively interest in this matter. Of course the years of friendship passed together have perhaps cemented ties that do not yearn to be dissevered."

Then she replied: "Years of pure, unsullied friendship always form a tie which does not yearn to be dissevered. He has been my playmate from the days of childhood. We have grown in years together in this village. He is of our people and now, more than ever, since this hated British conquest scatters blight and mildew on this Valley, do I hold to our own people. Lambert Reubasse and I belong to the same race and nation. He is innocent; for no Frenchman ever laid an angry hand on Pontiac."

To which the trader ventured farther: "One must admire the stand you take for your own people and certainly when your motives are devoid of every selfish interest. As I see that they are simply, purely those of friendship for your race and nation it makes me wish that I were included in that race and nation. I would rather

bask in rays of such devoted friendship than to sit upon the throne of Britain."

Nannette most firmly replied to this: "If your Captain heard this vow of treason you would sleep tonight within the cell with Lambert."

The trader responded: "Yes, but he shall not hear it from my lips and you certainly would not betray a friendly neighbor even though he be a Briton."

Nannette simply said: "I hate no individual; but in the abstract I hate the system which your rule has foisted on us."

The wily trader continued: "I am glad your hatred of the system does not quite extend to individuals. Otherwise I should not hope for any sort of friendly recognition. Your hatred of the system may be the outgrowth of your training. And as incident thereto I can well understand your zeal for him who may fall a victim before our British tribunal."

A faint glimmer of worldly reason began to dawn upon Nannette. She began to wonder why she heard these words from the lips of a foe-man. Turning sharply upon the young trader she asked him how he came to take such a lively interest in this matter himself. What promptings had led him along the path to her gateway at this nightly hour!

"Since you ply me with these questions," said the Briton, "I will answer. I had thought your underlying motives were far deeper than mere

friendship for Lambert Roubasse. If my guess had been correct I know you would gladly have accepted proffered assistance. Since, by implication, you disavow these stronger motives you may still accept the proffer of assistance in behalf of what you are pleased to call a member of your race and nation. And by your disavowal I have been encouraged to make still farther proffers."

"What service would you render that you come to speak of proffers of assistance?" queried Nannette.

"A service which would release your countryman. A service which to him means freedom. Which to you means satisfaction for the sake of friendship. Which to me means joy because of your satisfaction," responded he.

"Release my countryman?" said she; "what service can you render which might more securely prove his innocence than what I know it can be proved? And what joy could you feel over my satisfaction?"

"If you will listen," said the young trader, "I will tell you."

This young trader was a handsome fellow in the years of early manhood. Vigorous in physical make-up, cunning in intellect and susceptible to all the charms of beauty. He had often seen Nannette and in his heart had experienced many a flutter on account of the village maiden. He secretly had admitted to himself that she was

what every one else openly called her—the jewel of Cahokia. Hence he brought with his proffer of assistance that lurking passion which had long doted for the opportunity. Thinking the opportunity had at last presented itself, he boldly ventured thus to unfold his proffers with their ill-concealed intentions. And therefore he boldly, almost brazenly continued: “The answer is, a profligate of the profligates. This Kinneboo has sunk even lower in the scale of degeneracy than his Peoria-Indian ancestry. He is susceptible to the charms of rum and money. A very little of either would bribe him. If he were thus spirited away, his absence would leave no accuser and your friend would regain his freedom over which you could then rejoice and in your rejoicing I would feel that happiness which has long thirsted for an utterance. What man, who has ever fallen under your charms, would not partake of this happiness? And in order to merit a share I would willingly undertake to secure the protracted absence of Lambert’s accuser.”

Nannette fairly hissed: “Fiend; I have patiently listened to your words of insult. Now the warm blood of my dead mother’s kinsmen from the south of France mounts through all my veins and my heart becomes as resolute as that of my honest French-Swiss father, whose countrymen in the days of William Tell galled under the Austrian yoke as we in this Valley are now galling beneath the yoke of British tyranny. Not another word. No more insults. Not even a whisper or I shall arouse the whole village even

at this hour of the night-time. Within a few paces yonder is my Grandsire's cabin. He is anxiously awaiting my coming from my evening vespers. I know he has not yet retired. Old, feeble and decrepit, he now awaits me ere he goes to slumber. But, old, feeble and decrepit, he would crawl upon his hands and knees to mete out vengeance for these insults. You would bribe this profligate and also throw upon me the odium of profligacy. Rather than have me submit to such humiliation my friend would ask to suffer physical torture or rot in his cell and he would bless me with his expiring breath for preserving the honor of his race and nation. He is innocent and the morrow will prove it to the world as it is already proved to me. Get yourself away now. I leave you to the darkness of the night and the blackness of your foul conscience."

With this she left him, entered the little gateway, opened the cabin door and found Grandsire Vieuxtemps seated by his hearthstone, old, feeble and decrepit but waiting for this jewel of Cahokia.

CHAPTER SIX

THE TRIAL

The night dragged slowly on for Lambert Roubasse. The hours were long for Nannette Falliere. The night was filled with feverish dreams for Kinneboo, the half-breed; while the British trader's ears were ringing with the constant

repetition of seething words of womanly defiance which sounded like the echoes of the just rebuke administered by the village maiden.

At last the morrow came. Came for Lambert, the son of the drummer of Malplaquet. Came for Nannette, the jewel of the village. Came for Kinneboo, the half-breed. Came for the insolent young trader.

The morrow dawned upon the village of Cahokia.

The inhabitants arose from their slumbers. The smoke began to curl up from the wooden chimneys of their cabins. The simple breakfasts were prepared by the good housewives. The sun of the early springtime had risen on the Valley. The streets began to be filled with an air of commotion. Soon the villagers were all out in their best attire. In a sense, the place assumed a holiday appearance though one could perceive that it was a day of anxiety. All business was suspended without the formality of proclamation. The anxiety was heightened when a squad of soldiers marched from the fort through the long street to the scene of the catastrophe of the night before. This squad was headed by the British Captain in command of the garrison. They were going to form the military tribunal to hold the grand inquest. It was an important day in the annals of Cahokia. Its importance was realized by everybody. Every homestead was deserted; every occupant realizing that the greater safety of his homestead was bound up in the

fairness of the pending investigation. Men, women and children flocked to the place of meeting. It was an orderly assembly. The French inhabitants of the Mississippi Valley were an orderly people. For three quarters of a century they had lived under the mild sway of their own Commandants with but little need of government. Long years of peace and quiet had habituated them to a state of orderly behavior. On this occasion they assembled with respectful demeanor around the military tribunal. In their midst was exposed to view the body of the assassinated Chieftain dressed in the uniform which he had received from General Montcalm at the siege of Quebec. It was an impressive sight! The dead Chief, as he thus appeared in his soldier dress, was looked upon by every Frenchman almost with an eye which dimmed beneath the halo of some sacred image. And as he lay in quiet and impressive pomp, the halo of his image could almost be fancied to be seen reflected in the morning mist above him.

The inquest began. With the preliminary proceedings over, Kinneboo was called to take his place beside the body of Pontiac. As he did so it was plainly evident that he was ill at ease. While clearly anxious to implicate the Frenchman with the murder yet he manifested a nervousness which cast suspicion on his charges and gave a semblance of self-incrimination. He told of how he came upon the scene just as Roubasse committed the assassination of Pontiac and how Roubasse tried to flee but was caught

by him (Kinneboo) just as he tried to cross the Rigolet and, at the signal given, was prevented from escaping by the timely arrival of the other Indians, who secured him. This latter part of his story was partly corroborated by these other Indians, who testified to hearing the signal given, their hastening to the place from whence it came, finding Roubasse and Kinneboo in a struggle and finally the capture of Roubasse by them. In addition to this testimony many of the visitors to the ball-room were called upon to speak and in answer admitted that Roubasse had not been present during the evening of the ball. No one, who was called, had seen him after he had left his homestead after supper. During the progress of the interrogation, the young trader, whose insolence had been so meritoriously rebuked the night before, was skulking through the outer fringes of the populace and at the close of Kinneboo's testimony sought that "profligate" with whom he held close consultation. After the very honest but damaging admission by the villagers of Lambert's absence from the ball-room this trader could have been seen to leer upon the accused. But his leer was soon dispelled by one who forced her way through the crowd just as the Captain of Militia was demanding of Roubasse what he had to say in his own behalf. Pushing aside the bystanders, Nannette stepped before the tribunal and said: "I will answer for him."

There was no tumult at this interruption. There was no applause, no outburst. But in each

Frenchman's breast a heart was whispering, "There is Nannette; there's the jewel of Cahokia."

With the tacit consent of everybody, Nannette proceeded to give her account of the momentous happenings to which she had been a witness during the past twelve hours. It was a simple, plain, unvarnished story, and as the truth fell from her lips, in accents clear, her listeners heard and felt and saw the mystery clear away. The veil which hung around the awful deed was brushed aside. And as the morning mists, which hovered near till then, began to rise, that veil seemed lifted in their upward course. Then while the sun of nature shone, undimmed by fog, the sun of truth cast forth its rays which made the Valley smile in gladdened thankfulness.

Nannette told it all. Told of her evening pilgrimage to the Mission of Saint Sulpice; her return and meeting with the accused outside the ball-room; their "solemn journey homeward"; their confidential talk upon the Rigolet; the awful deed they witnessed. Intense interest followed every utterance. When she described how the weapon was used upon Pontiac by a savage foe, all eagerness was riveted upon her. When at this juncture her eyes began to search through the crowd for some object, the eyes of the crowd followed hers. Her look was so searching that everything quailed before it. But her search was momentary. She realized suddenly, but too late, that in her zeal she had allowed something to

happen. Her eyes flashed and with a sudden shriek she exclaimed: "Kinneboo, the assassin, is gone!"

A shudder ran through the crowd. But the crowd soon recovered from its shudder. Then came a current of steadiness. Then a calm, noiseless determination seized the crowd to hunt the slayer. But from this they were dissuaded by the drummer of Malplaquet who said: "Perhaps it is better that he has been allowed to flee; but let us finish the matter under consideration."

Lambert then was questioned by the Captain touching the incidents of the previous evening and in as far as he was allowed to answer he corroborated Nannette's story. The inquest was now nearly concluded. Again the maiden stepped forward and asked permission to add a statement which she had neglected to make during the excitement over the escape of Kinneboo. This statement was with reference to the corrupt proposition made to her by the British trader. At this statement the crowd was thrown into a perfect frenzy. Although all had been orderly and peaceable, now, vows of vengeance were uttered in open and unmeasured terms. A tumult seemed impending. A riot seemed inevitable. But the angry waves of passion were again subdued by a young subaltern who was stationed at the garrison. This young English officer was well known and respected by all the villagers. Although no countryman of theirs yet in their intercourse

with him they had learned to look upon him as the very soul of honor. He stepped forward and said: "If a scoundrel has cast a stain upon the name of Briton, there are yet enough of us who love our nation's honor to blot away the stain."

At which the villagers cried "Bravo," and were ready to listen to the young subaltern, who said he had purposely come to see that their countryman should have justice dealt out to him. And in order to contribute toward securing the release of Lambert Roubasse he would add his testimony of what he saw and heard during the afternoon of the day before at the garrison. Lieutenant Speedwell then proceeded to detail how, immediately after the arrival of Pontiac, he overheard a conversation between Kinneboo and the trader, who had so gravely insulted Nanette. This conversation took place in the storehouse of the garrison. His attention was called to it by the excited yet subdued tones of which the participants made use. While he did not know then whom the matter involved he nevertheless overheard enough to be able to say that the Indian had been promised a barrel of rum by the trader for some purpose. When he heard the messenger call for the Captain, the night before, to attend at the place of assassination, the thought immediately flashed across his mind that he had unintentionally overheard the plot which ended so fatally. Rather than submit his nation to any further stigma he had come to denounce the real culprits. The crowd applauded the bearing and conduct of the young subal-

tern Speedwell; though both the culprits were now missing. Kinneboo and the trader had escaped as the developments were unfolding. There was nothing left now on the part of the tribunal but to order the release of Roubasse. Searching parties were instituted to find the escaped assassins. The body of Pontiac was taken by his friends across the Mississippi and buried near the Spanish Fort in the infant settlement of St. Louis (founded five years previously by Pierre Laclede).

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE HAPPY CULMINATION

Time rolled on at its accustomed pace. The British possession of the Mississippi Valley, however, was short-lived. From the time that the Scotch Highlanders, under Captain Sterling, took up their headquarters at Fort Chartres in 1765 to the taking of Kaskaskia and Cahokia and Vincennes in 1778 by Clark and a handful of Virginians and Kentuckians and the delivery of the Northwest to the Old Dominion of Virginia was but the span of thirteen years—an illfated number. From the date of the assassination of Pontiac the renowned Ottawa Indian Chieftain in 1769 to the time of the transfer to the Colony of Virginia under Patrick Henry as its Governor was a still shorter span of only nine years. Yet in these years and those succeeding until the Treaty of Peace at the conclusion of the War of Independence in 1783, many transformations took place. After the conquest of the Northwest came

the influx of American settlers, mainly from the Southland, into the Valley; and the Grand Marais even had its name transformed and was mis-nomered by the newcomers as the "Grand Murray Lake." The original French inhabitants or at least many of them moved away from their original habitats. Whatever became of Kinneboo and the English trader has never been adequately solved by the historians. They seem to have dropped out of the picture. Grandsire Vieuxtemps passed from under the "blight" after the Americans came to lift it through the advent of their coming; but he also finally passed from under all the cares of this world by going to the Great Beyond after having attained many years beyond the age allotted to most men. His relict, the good Madame, in her loneliness followed, leaving the impress of her many years of exemplary bearing. Jean Pierre Falliere, their Franco-Swiss son-in-law (the father of the village maiden so fondly named "The Jewel of Cahokia"), still tended the arpents of the Vieuxtemps homestead and Nannette kept the household affairs in good order. She had grown into comely and mature womanhood. The elder Roubasse had parted with the drum which he had seized on the battlefield of Malplaquet and left it as an heirloom, with his arpents, to his son, Lambert. Lambert religiously kept and guarded both the drum and arpents. During this keeping and guarding he had witnessed the advent of a new government and the establishment of a new nation and had added to his ancestral arpents

until he had acquired a competency, on the strength of which he began to yearn for a congenial settled future.

All the while the friendship which had continued through infancy and youth, through joy and sorrow, through blight and sunshine was still as constant between Nannette and Lambert as when they played together on the Rigolet nearly three decades before. Chancing one evening to meet at the selfsame spot where just ten years before they had met, outside the ball-room, they made their friendly salutations to one another after which Lambert said: "Suppose in honor of the anniversary of the event, which occurred several years ago this evening, we repeat the march together as we did then toward your homestead. You are returning now from vespers as you did upon that fateful evening." To which she assented and together they again made a "solemn journey homeward." On, they walked between the rows of houses till they reached the Rigolet, where years before they had stopped and where she had told him "her plaintive story." Recalling the occasion, Lambert said in addressing her: "Now as I listened to your story many years ago will you listen to mine on the bank of this gurgling streamlet? Mine is likewise plaintive. Mine is one of longing which I oft have yearned to tell you. And the only reason I have hesitated until this moment is because I wanted to wait until Time, with all its opportune accompaniments, should warrant that the arrival of the

proper occasion had made its advent."

Then gently taking her hand in his, he adverted to their uninterrupted acquaintance which had continued from their earliest childhood until that moment; how he owed her not only a debt of gratitude for that acquaintance but also a debt for what had brought his rescue from the grasp which the "blight" had cast upon the Valley and the circumstance which almost engulfed his own personal safety. All this now was numbered with the bygone in which they had lived and grown to man's and woman's estate. The future lay before them; under a new regime, with the promise of a growing betterment. What now should prevent the realization of that mutual longing which long acquaintance and kindly acts toward one another naturally should ripen into more than mere friendship and acquaintance? And in the gloaming of that evening, Nannette understood his meaning. Neither withdrew the handgrasp from the other and there on the bank of that Rigolet (A), whose gentle murmurs still carried the echoes of the expiring throes of Pontiac, they plighted their troth to one another.

In due time the bans were announced in the village church and when the time arrived for their final announcement the date was set for the consummation of the most important event which ever happened on the Grand Marais. When that time arrived, all the habitants of the village gathered for the occasion and as they

witnessed the joining together of Lambert Rou-basse and Nannette Falliere, after the Reverend Father had pronounced his benediction on their union, a loud acclaim came from all the villagers like a mighty chorus; "God bless Lambert, the son of the Drummer of Malplaquet, and Nannette, the Jewel of Cahokia."



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